

**Introduced by Senators Vasconcellos, McPherson, Poochigian,
and Romero**

April 21, 2004

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 77—Relative to the State
Advisory Committee on Institutional Religion.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 77, as introduced, Vasconcellos. State Advisory Committee
on Institutional Religion.

This measure would commend the 56 years of work of the State
Advisory Committee on Institutional Religion in assisting the
implementation of chaplaincy programs within various state
institutions and would urge the committee to assist state agencies that
employ institutional chaplains to make the most effective possible use
of staff, volunteers, and other resources.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, The First Amendment to the United States
2 Constitution assures the free exercise of religion; and

3 WHEREAS, The California Constitution also guarantees the
4 exercise of religious freedom without discrimination or
5 preference; and

6 WHEREAS, United States Supreme Court decisions affirm that
7 institutionalized persons should be enabled to practice the religion
8 of their choice; and

9 WHEREAS, Substantial public benefits result from active
10 religious programs within state juvenile facilities, prisons,
11 development centers, and hospitals; these benefits can include

1 reduced stress levels within the institutions, and improved
2 institutional performance; and

3 WHEREAS, People who are confined in juvenile facilities or
4 state prisons or who reside in development centers or state
5 hospitals present unique challenges to the public officers,
6 chaplains, churches, and religious groups that are concerned with
7 satisfying spiritual needs within the institutions; and

8 WHEREAS, The isolated environment of juvenile facilities,
9 state prisons, and state hospitals, and the special relationships that
10 these institutions have with the larger community call for special
11 training of their chaplains; and

12 WHEREAS, The active assistance of staff members in each
13 institution is an essential element in the success of every religious
14 program; and

15 WHEREAS, Chaplains are often involved in contacts with
16 family members in the community that play an important role in
17 the spiritual health of wards, prisoners, clients, and patients; and

18 WHEREAS, The State Advisory Committee on Institutional
19 Religion was established in 1948 under the leadership of Richard
20 A. McGee, then Director of Corrections; Earl Warren, then
21 Governor; and Dr. Norman Fenton, the first Chairman of the
22 committee; and

23 WHEREAS, The State Advisory Committee on Institutional
24 Religion is the forum in which partnerships are maintained
25 between the faith community and the executive branch of
26 government in addressing the many issues that affect the success
27 of religious programs in state institutions, especially through the
28 ongoing refinement of policies and manuals that support religious
29 programs in each agency; and

30 WHEREAS, the State Advisory Committee on Institutional
31 Religion has continuously worked to improve the professional
32 qualifications of prison chaplains; and

33 WHEREAS, Recent budgetary constraints and reductions in
34 institutional staffing have placed unusual stresses on the abilities
35 of agencies, chaplains, and volunteers to address the spiritual
36 needs of staff, wards, prisoners, clients, and patients; now,
37 therefore, be it

38 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly*
39 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature commends the 56 years
40 of work by the State Advisory Committee on Institutional Religion



1 in assisting the implementation of chaplaincy programs within the
2 California Youth Authority, the Department of Corrections, the
3 Department of Developmental Services, the Department of
4 Mental Health, and the Department of Veterans Affairs; and be it
5 further

6 *Resolved*, That during this time of fiscal crisis the Legislature
7 urges the State Advisory Committee on Institutional Religion to
8 assist the state agencies that employ institutional chaplains to make
9 the most effective possible use of staff, volunteer assistance, and
10 other resources that contribute to the spiritual health of
11 individuals; and be it further

12 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of
13 this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

